

GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE-06

PSALMS, CHAPTER 119

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: Psalm 119:9-16.
- B. Tonight, I continue my sermon series on the greatest chapters in the Bible.

II. INTRODUCTION TO THE 119TH PSALM (God's Glorious Word).

- A. From the standpoint of poetic artistry, this psalm is truly amazing. It is an alphabetic psalm consisting of 22 stanzas corresponding in order to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza has 8 verses of two lines each and the first line of each verse begins with the particular Hebrew letter for that stanza. All eight verses of the first stanza begin with 'aleph, the eight verses of the second stanza begin with *beth*, etc.
- B. The psalm is entirely composed of praise to God for His revelation to Israel. "Law" is a general term which means instruction or direction. It may be applied to legal precepts, but can also indicate God's promises, historical facts, and descriptions of God's nature.
- C. The psalmist is no legalist who believes in the merit of law keeping. Rather, he knows that God must supply the strength to enable him to keep the law. God's word provides life, light, confidence, peace, and freedom from anxiety.
- D. God's faithfulness gives confidence and fills the faithful covenant person with delight in doing the will of God. God's mercy, grace, and love provide the necessary guidance and discipline to keep the sincere follower in the right way.

III. PSALM 119:1-8 (The way of blamelessness).

- A. The text:
How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD. [2] How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart. [3] They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. [4] Thou hast ordained Thy precepts, That we should keep them diligently. [5] Oh that my ways may be established To keep Thy statutes! [6] Then I shall not be ashamed When I look upon all Thy commandments. [7] I shall give thanks to Thee with uprightness of heart, When I learn Thy righteous judgments. [8] I shall keep Thy statutes; Do not forsake me utterly!
- B. This stanza emphasizes God's requirements and the necessary human response (see 119:1-4).

IV. PSALM 119:9-16 (The way of purity).

- A. The text:
How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word. [10] With all my heart I have sought Thee; Do not let me wander from Thy commandments. [11] Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee. [12] Blessed art Thou, O LORD; Teach me Thy statutes. [13] With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Thy mouth. [14] I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, As much as in all riches. [15] I will meditate on Thy precepts, And regard Thy ways. [16] I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word.
- B. The human tendency to sin is emphasized. The righteous man recognizes that God's word is meant to shield him from sin (see 119:9-11).

V. PSALM 119:17-24 (The way of divine counsel).

- A. The text:
Deal bountifully with Thy servant, That I may live and keep Thy word. [18] Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Thy law. [19] I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Thy commandments from me. [20] My soul is crushed with longing After Thine ordinances at all times. [21] Thou dost rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, Who wander from Thy commandments. [22] Take away reproach and contempt from me, For I observe Thy testimonies. [23] Even though princes sit and talk against me, Thy servant meditates on Thy statutes. [24] Thy testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors.

- B. Note that his interest in the word is not merely academic, but very practical. He desires to 'behold wondrous things' so that he 'may observe the word' and so that God's 'testimonies' will serve as his counselors (see 119:17,18,24).

VI. PSALM 119:25-32 (The way of faithfulness).

A. The text:

My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Thy word. [26] I have told of my ways, and Thou hast answered me; Teach me Thy statutes. [27] Make me understand the way of Thy precepts, So I will meditate on Thy wonders. [28] My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Thy word. [29] Remove the false way from me. And graciously grant me Thy law. [30] I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Thine ordinances before me. [31] I cleave to Thy testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame! [32] I shall run the way of Thy commandments, For Thou wilt enlarge my heart.

- B. In the throes of death, he prays for revival of life. 'Run in the way of thy commandments' means to be diligent and zealous in obedience (see 119:27,28,31,32).

VII. PSALM 119:33-40 (The way of life).

A. The text:

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes, And I shall observe it to the end. [34] Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, And keep it with all my heart. [35] Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, For I delight in it. [36] Incline my heart to Thy testimonies, And not to dishonest gain. [37] Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, And revive me in Thy ways. [38] Establish Thy word to Thy servant. As that which produces reverence for Thee. [39] Turn away my reproach which I dread, For Thine ordinances are good. [40] Behold, I long for Thy precepts; Revive me through Thy righteousness.

- B. The psalm reveals a studied effort to demonstrate reliance upon the God of the word as well as the word of God (see 119:33,34,38).

VIII. PSALM 119:41-48 (The way of liberty).

A. The text:

May Thy lovingkindnesses also come to me, O LORD, Thy salvation according to Thy word; [42] So I shall have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Thy word. [43] And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I wait for Thine ordinances. [44] So I will keep Thy law continually, Forever and ever. [45] And I will walk at liberty. For I seek Thy precepts. [46] I will also speak of Thy testimonies before kings, And shall not be ashamed. [47] And I shall delight in Thy commandments, Which I love. [48] And I shall lift up my hands to Thy commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Thy statutes.

- B. 'Liberty' means to be free from distress or anxiety (see 119:45,47,48).

IX. PSALM 119:49-56 (The way of obedience).

A. The text:

Remember the word to Thy servant, In which Thou hast made me hope. [50] This is my comfort in my affliction, That Thy word has revived me. [51] The arrogant utterly deride me, Yet I do not turn aside from Thy law. [52] I have remembered Thine ordinances from of old, O LORD, And comfort myself. [53] Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, Who forsake Thy law. [54] Thy statutes are my songs In the house of my pilgrimage. [55] O LORD, I remember Thy name in the night, And keep Thy law. [56] This has become mine, That I observe Thy precepts.

- B. Recognition of divine blessing resulting from keeping God's precepts produces a triple reaction:

1. He is filled with comfort in affliction because he knows he is a recipient of God's promise.
2. He is filled with hot indignation toward the wicked, which forsake God's law.
3. His filled with praise for God, who protects and preserves him.

- C. See 119:52-54.

X. **PSALM 119:57-64 (The way of fellowship).**

A. The text:

The LORD is my portion; I have promised to keep Thy words. [58] I entreated Thy favor with all *my* heart; Be gracious to me according to Thy word. [59] I considered my ways, And turned my feet to Thy testimonies. [60] I hastened and did not delay To keep Thy commandments. [61] The cords of the wicked have encircled me. But I have not forgotten Thy law. [62] At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to Thee Because of Thy righteous ordinances. [63] I am a companion of all those who fear Thee, And of those who keep Thy precepts. [64] The earth is full of Thy lovingkindness, O LORD; Teach me Thy statutes.

- B. Portion is from a root which can mean to divide into shares. The noun, in this context, means God's sharing himself with man, hence fellowship (see 119:58-60).

XI. **PSALM 119:65-72 (The way of discipline).**

A. The text:

Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O LORD, according to Thy word. [66] Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Thy commandments. [67] Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Thy word. [68] Thou art good and doest good; Teach me Thy statutes. [69] The arrogant have forged a lie against me; With all *my* heart I will observe Thy precepts. [70] Their heart is covered with fat, *But* I delight in Thy law. [71] It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Thy statutes. [72] The law of Thy mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

- B. Affliction has brought him back from a wayward life. God has dealt well with him and is good in all the He does. Rather than being bitter about God's discipline, he considers God's laws as more precious than much gold and silver (see 119:65-68,71,72).

XII. **PSALM 119:73-80 (The way of mercy).**

A. The text:

Thy hands made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments. [74] May those who fear Thee see me and be glad, Because I wait for Thy word. [75] I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me. [76] O may Thy lovingkindness comfort me, According to Thy word to Thy servant. [77] May Thy compassion come to me that I may live, For Thy law is my delight. [78] May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; *But* I shall meditate on Thy precepts. [79] May those who fear Thee turn to me, Even those who know Thy testimonies. [80] May my heart be blameless in Thy statutes, That I may not be ashamed.

- B. The psalmist recognizes that God's discipline is right but he also needs God's mercy and steadfast love (see 119:75-77).

XIII. **PSALM 119:81-88 (The way of endurance).**

A. The text:

My soul languishes for Thy salvation; I wait for Thy word. [82] My eyes fail *with longing* for Thy word, While I say, "When wilt Thou comfort me?" [83] Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget Thy statutes. [84] How many are the days of Thy servant? When wilt Thou execute judgment on those who persecute me? [85] The arrogant have dug pits for me, *Men* who are not in accord with Thy law. [86] All Thy commandments are faithful; They have persecuted me with a lie; help me! [87] They almost destroyed me on earth, *But* as for me, I did not forsake Thy precepts. [88] Revive me according to Thy lovingkindness, So that I may keep the testimony of Thy mouth.

- B. He hopes in God's word and has not forgotten his statutes. He knows that God's commandments are sure, so he has not forsaken God's precepts. He does not despair of faith, but of life (see 119:83,86-88).

XIV. PSALM 119:89-96 (The way of certainty).

A. The text:

Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven. [90] Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations; Thou didst establish the earth, and it stands. [91] They stand this day according to Thine ordinances. For all things are Thy servants. [92] If Thy law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction. [93] I will never forget Thy precepts, For by them Thou hast revived me. [94] I am Thine, save me; For I have sought Thy precepts. [95] The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Thy testimonies. [96] I have seen a limit to all perfection; Thy commandment is exceedingly broad.

- B. There is a reference in the stanza to the fact that the worlds exist and function in an orderly way because of God's word. From God's seat of government, His immutable word goes forth, and the whole creation, as God's servants, must bow in submission (see 119:89-91,96).

XV. PSALM 119:97-104 (The way of wisdom).

A. The text:

O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day. [98] Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. [99] I have more insight than all my teachers, For Thy testimonies are my meditation. [100] I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Thy precepts. [101] I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Thy word. [102] I have not turned aside from Thine ordinances, For Thou Thyself hast taught me. [103] How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! [104] From Thy precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

- B. As hate is the antithesis of love, so the one who loves God's truth hates every false way (see 119:97-100,103,104).

XVI. PSALM 119:105-112 (The way of light).

A. The text:

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path. [106] I have sworn, and I will confirm it, That I will keep Thy righteous ordinances. [107] I am exceedingly afflicted; Revive me, O LORD, according to Thy word. [108] O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, And teach me Thine ordinances. [109] My life is continually in my hand, Yet I do not forget Thy law. [110] The wicked have laid a snare for me, Yet I have not gone astray from Thy precepts. [111] I have inherited Thy testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart. [112] I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes Forever, even to the end.

- B. The psalmist thinks of the person travelling by foot at night with a lamp attached to his ankles or feet to show him the way (see 119:105,106).

XVII. PSALM 119:113-120 (The way of fear).

A. The text:

I hate those who are double-minded, But I love Thy law. [114] Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Thy word. [115] Depart from me, evildoers, That I may observe the commandments of my God. [116] Sustain me according to Thy word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope. [117] Uphold me that I may be safe, That I may have regard for Thy statutes continually. [118] Thou hast rejected all those who wander from Thy statutes, For their deceitfulness is useless. [119] Thou hast removed all the wicked of the earth like dross; Therefore I love Thy testimonies. [120] My flesh trembles for fear of Thee, And I am afraid of Thy judgments.

- B. In short, the fear of the Lord is the essence of religion. In the stanza before us, emphasis is given to the wrath of God which causes pious men to be afraid of God's judgment (see 119:115,116,119,120).

XVIII. PSALM 119:121-128 (The way of justice).

A. The text:

I have done justice and righteousness; Do not leave me to my oppressors. [122] Be surety for Thy servant for good; Do not let the arrogant oppress me. [123] My eyes fail with longing for Thy salvation, And for Thy righteous word. [124] Deal with Thy servant according to Thy lovingkindness, And teach me Thy statutes. [125] I am Thy servant; give me understanding, That I may know Thy testimonies. [126] It is time for the LORD to act, For they have broken Thy law. [127] Therefore I love Thy commandments Above gold, yes, above fine gold. [128] Therefore I esteem right all Thy precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way.

- B. Since the psalmist has done what is just and right, he feels that he has a right to expect the Lord to protect him against his oppressors. He asks God to be the surety, or guarantor, for his welfare. He wearily waits for God to act on his behalf(see 119:121-123,126).

XIX. PSALM 119:129-136 (The way of steadfastness).

A. The text:

Thy testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul observes them. [130] The unfolding of Thy words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. [131] I opened my mouth wide and panted, For I longed for Thy commandments. [132] Turn to me and be gracious to me, After Thy manner with those who love Thy name. [133] Establish my footsteps in Thy word, And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me. [134] Redeem me from the oppression of man. That I may keep Thy precepts. [135] Make Thy face shine upon Thy servant, And teach me Thy statutes. [136] My eyes shed streams of water, Because they do not keep Thy law.

- B. The unfolding of God's words must be met with deep desire or longing on man's part. The word imparts understanding to none save those who receive it. Like a hungry animal panting with open mouth, he longs for God's word (see 119:129-131).

XX. PSALM 119:137-144 (The way of righteousness).

A. The text:

Righteous art Thou, O LORD, And upright are Thy judgments. [138] Thou hast commanded Thy testimonies in righteousness And exceeding faithfulness. [139] My zeal has consumed me, Because my adversaries have forgotten Thy words. [140] Thy word is very pure, Therefore Thy servant loves it. [141] I am small and despised, Yet I do not forget Thy precepts. [142] Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Thy law is truth. [143] Trouble and anguish have come upon me; Yet Thy commandments are my delight. [144] Thy testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live.

- B. Thy testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live. Since God is righteous, so His judgments are right, and since God's righteousness is righteous forever, so are His testimonies (see 119:137-138,142-144).

XXI. PSALM 119:145-152 (The way of hope).

A. The text:

I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD! I will observe Thy statutes. [146] I cried to Thee; save me, And I shall keep Thy testimonies. [147] I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Thy words. [148] My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may meditate on Thy word. [149] Hear my voice according to Thy lovingkindness; Revive me, O LORD, according to Thine ordinances. [150] Those who follow after wickedness draw near; They are far from Thy law. [151] Thou art near, O LORD, And all Thy commandments are truth. [152] Of old I have known from Thy testimonies, That Thou hast founded them forever.

- B. Sincerely, wholeheartedly he cries for help because he trusts in God's promises and desires to obey his word (see 119:145-148).

XXII. PSALM 119:153-160 (The way of vitality).

- A. The text:
Look upon my affliction and rescue me, For I do not forget Thy law. [154] Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to Thy word. [155] Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Thy statutes. [156] Great are Thy mercies, O LORD; Revive me according to Thine ordinances. [157] Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, Yet I do not turn aside from Thy testimonies. [158] I behold the treacherous and loathe them, Because they do not keep Thy word. [159] Consider how I love Thy precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Thy lovingkindness. [160] The sum of Thy word is truth, And every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting.
- B. The word 'life' in this psalm can best be described as spiritual vitality which provides the essential incentive, energy, and satisfaction so necessary for successful living (see 119:153-154, 156, 159-160).

XXIII. PSALM 119:161-168 (The way of rejoicing).

- A. The text:
Princes persecute me without cause, But my heart stands in awe of Thy words. [162] I rejoice at Thy word, As one who finds great spoil. [163] I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Thy law. [164] Seven times a day I praise Thee, Because of Thy righteous ordinances. [165] Those who love Thy law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble. [166] I hope for Thy salvation, O LORD, And do Thy commandments. [167] My soul keeps Thy testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. [168] I keep Thy precepts and Thy testimonies, For all my ways are before Thee.
- B. Not only is his obedience motivated by awe, but also by the joy resulting from a rewarding search, by his love for God's law, and by the hope which God's promises engender (see 119:162-165).

XXIV. PSALM 119:169-176 (The way of confession).

- A. The text:
Let my cry come before Thee, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Thy word. [170] Let my supplication come before Thee; Deliver me according to Thy word. [171] Let my lips utter praise, For Thou dost teach me Thy statutes. [172] Let my tongue sing of Thy word, For all Thy commandments are righteousness. [173] Let Thy hand be ready to help me, For I have chosen Thy precepts. [174] I long for Thy salvation, O LORD, And Thy law is my delight. [175] Let my soul live that it may praise Thee, And let Thine ordinances help me. [176] I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant, For I do not forget Thy commandments.
- B. He cries for help, supplicates God, and anticipates the praise in song that he will render to God when He answers him. Because God's precepts have been deliberately chosen, and the law is a source of delight, the psalmist confidently prays for revival of life (119:169, 171-172, 174-175).

VII. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. How appropriate that the psalmist chose to end this lengthy encomium of God for his word with a humble confession of his sinfulness. As one becomes more spiritually mature, he acquires a deeper understanding of the nature of sin. Things once overlooked now become recognizable marks of imperfections. May we learn to trust in God's righteousness and faithfulness as these pious psalmists did.
- B. Did you see yourself tonight? In a good way; in a bad way?
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.